



# Nano-Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts for CO oxidation: Influence of dopants (Fe, La and Zr) on the physicochemical properties and catalytic activity



Putla Sudarsanam<sup>a</sup>, Baithy Malleshm<sup>a</sup>, Padigapati S. Reddy<sup>a</sup>, D. Großmann<sup>b</sup>,  
Wolfgang Grünert<sup>b</sup>, Benjaram M. Reddy<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Inorganic and Physical Chemistry Division, CSIR – Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Uppal Road, Hyderabad 500 607, India

<sup>b</sup> Laboratory of Industrial Chemistry, Ruhr-University Bochum, D-44780 Bochum, Germany

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## ABSTRACT

The present investigation was undertaken to know the influence of different dopants on the physicochemical properties and catalytic behavior of nano-Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> catalyst for CO oxidation. Accordingly, various metal ions namely, Fe<sup>3+</sup>, La<sup>3+</sup> and Zr<sup>4+</sup> were incorporated into the ceria lattice by a facile coprecipitation approach using ultra-high dilute aqueous solutions. An anion adsorption method was used to prepare the Au/doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts in the absence of any base, reducing and protective agents. The physicochemical characterization was performed by XRD, BET surface area, ICP-AES, TG-DTA, FT-IR, TEM, UV–vis DRS, Raman, XPS and TPD techniques. Doped CeO<sub>2</sub> exhibited smaller crystallite size, higher BET surface area and larger amount of oxygen vacancies than the pure CeO<sub>2</sub>. These remarkable properties showed a beneficial effect toward gold particle size as confirmed by XRD and TEM studies. XPS results revealed that Au is present in the metallic state and Ce in both +3 and +4 oxidation states. Incorporation of Zr into the Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> resulted in high CO oxidation activity attributed to the presence of more Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions and oxygen vacancies. In contrast, the La-incorporation caused an opposite effect due to the presence of carbonate species on the surface of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> catalyst, which blocked the active sites essential for CO oxidation. It was shown that accumulation of carbonate species strongly depends on the acid–base properties of the supports. The catalytic performance of Au catalysts is highly dependent on the nature of the support.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the pioneering research of Haruta et al. the use of supported gold nanoparticles (Au NPs) for low temperature CO oxidation has attracted significant interest in heterogeneous catalysis [1]. CO is a highly toxic gas and exposure to a few hundred ppm can cause permanent health damage or even death [2,3]. The study of CO oxidation over Au catalysts provided several industrial applications, such as gas purification in CO<sub>2</sub> lasers and CO gas sensors, air-purification devices for respiratory protection, and pollution control devices for reducing automotive emissions [4,5]. The additional potential uses of Au catalysts have been actively investigated, including water-gas-shift reaction, NO<sub>x</sub> abatement, combustion of volatile organic compounds, selective oxidation and hydrogenation of organic compounds, C–C coupling reactions, and synthesis of N- and O-heterocycles [5,6].

Numerous factors have been examined, including the Au particle size and its size distribution, Au oxidation state, nature of the

support and the preparation method to elucidate such exceptional low temperature CO oxidation activity of Au catalysts [7,8]. Primarily, the nature of the metal oxide supports and thereby, stimulated interactions between gold and metal oxides play a significant role in the CO oxidation. The key function of any support is to prevent abnormal growth of active metal particles. The enhanced interactions between the gold and metal oxides can effectively stabilize the gold particles through a wider contact area, hence higher perimeter interfaces around them. They also facilitate additional active sites at the gold/support interface for the adsorption of the reactants close to the gold particles [9,10]. Au NPs have been deposited on a variety of metal oxides, such as CeO<sub>2</sub>, La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub> (active supports), and Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, SiO<sub>2</sub> and MgO (inert supports) [11,12]. It was found that Au catalysts show remarkable activity when the Au NPs are dispersed on the active metal oxide supports. The difference between inert and active supports can be assigned to their adsorption ability of O<sub>2</sub> in the CO oxidation. An inert oxide exhibits poor O<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity and the oxidation of CO proceeds by dissociative adsorption of O<sub>2</sub> on the gold. In such case, the activity behavior is favored either on metal surface defect sites (e.g., edge, kink, or step) or on small gold particles. In contrast, an active oxide has strong ability to adsorb O<sub>2</sub> where it may or may not

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +91 40 2719 1714; fax: +91 40 2716 0921.

E-mail addresses: [bmreddy@iict.res.in](mailto:bmreddy@iict.res.in), [mreddyb@yahoo.com](mailto:mreddyb@yahoo.com) (B.M. Reddy).

dissociate before reacting with CO adsorbed on the gold. At this juncture, CO oxidation is sensitive to the microcrystalline structure of the gold-support interface.

Among the metal oxide supports, CeO<sub>2</sub> has gained remarkable attention due to the presence of oxygen vacancy defects generated by Ce<sup>4+</sup>/Ce<sup>3+</sup> redox process, which allows effective O<sub>2</sub> adsorption and activation for CO oxidation [7]. It is a well-established fact in the literature that doping of appropriate metal ions into the ceria lattice enhance its unique structural and redox properties [13,14]. Doped ceria materials exhibit smaller crystallite size, higher surface area, abundant oxygen vacancies and enhanced redox properties compared to the parent ceria. The choice of dopant metal ion and its amount to incorporate into the ceria are very crucial because different dopants will have different optimum compositions and some are even not miscible over the full composition range. For example, 50% Zr-incorporation into the CeO<sub>2</sub> resulted in better redox properties compared to other molar ratios [15,16]. When Zr<sup>4+</sup> is incorporated into the CeO<sub>2</sub> lattice, the induced distortion of the O<sup>2-</sup> sublattice in the mixed oxide enhances the mobility of lattice oxygen [17]. Thus, the reducible nature of Ce<sup>4+</sup> is no longer confined to the ceria surface, but it extends intensely into the bulk, promoting the reduction of Ce<sup>4+</sup> to Ce<sup>3+</sup>. In contrast, the Ce–La mixed oxides even at low doping amount of La (e.g., 20% in balance with Ce) exhibit a large amount of oxygen vacancies and improved redox properties accounting for the charge neutrality in the ceria lattice [14]. On the other hand, the solubility of Fe in the CeO<sub>2</sub> is very low, and better physicochemical properties are observed for small doping amounts of Fe, in particular for 10% of Fe-incorporation [18–20]. Therefore, the amount of metal ions to incorporate into the ceria lattice highly depends on the nature of the metal.

The objective of the present study was to investigate the effect of dopants on the physicochemical properties and catalytic behavior of nano-Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> catalyst for CO oxidation. Accordingly, we have prepared a series of CeO<sub>2</sub>-based supports by incorporating the optimum amounts of Zr, Fe and La into the ceria lattice. Generally, metal oxide supported Au catalysts are prepared by conventional deposition–precipitation or coprecipitation methods [21]. In these processes, the Au precursor is precipitated by means of a base (NaOH, (NH<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>, etc.) under normalized pH conditions. Although, these techniques have proven to produce small Au particles, control over the particle dispersion is rather difficult. Herein, an anion adsorption method was used to prepare the Au/doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts in the optimism of improving the Au dispersion [21]. For comparison, an undoped Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> catalyst was also prepared under identical conditions. The synthesized catalysts were systematically characterized by means of various techniques, namely, X-ray diffraction (XRD), BET surface area, inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectroscopy (ICP-AES), X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), Raman spectroscopy, UV–vis diffuse reflectance spectroscopy (UV–vis DRS), thermogravimetric–differential thermal analysis (TG–DTA), Fourier transform infrared (FT-IR) spectroscopy, temperature programmed desorption (TPD) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM). The catalytic performance was studied for the oxidation of CO in a fixed bed micro-reactor. Attempts were made to correlate the catalytic activity results with the characterization studies.

## 2. Experimental

### 2.1. Catalyst preparation

The ceria-based mixed oxide supports, namely, CeO<sub>2</sub>–M<sub>x</sub>O<sub>y</sub> (M<sub>x</sub>O<sub>y</sub> = Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and ZrO<sub>2</sub>) were prepared by a facile and economical coprecipitation method from ultra-high

dilute aqueous solutions. The precursors employed were NH<sub>4</sub>Ce(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O (Aldrich, AR grade), ZrO(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·xH<sub>2</sub>O (Fluka, AR grade), La(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O (Aldrich, AR grade) and Fe(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O (Aldrich, AR grade). In a typical procedure, to prepare CeO<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (CF = 90:10 molar ratio based on metal oxides) the required quantities of metal precursors were dissolved in double distilled water separately under mild stirring conditions and mixed together. Then, an aqueous NH<sub>3</sub> solution was added drop-wise until the pH of the solution reached to ~8.5. The produced precipitates were recovered by filtration and washed with double distilled water several times until free from anion impurities, oven-dried at 393 K for 12 h and finally calcined in air at 773 K for 5 h (5 K/min). Similarly, CeO<sub>2</sub>–ZrO<sub>2</sub> (CZ = 50:50), CeO<sub>2</sub>–La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (CL = 80:20), and a pure CeO<sub>2</sub> (C) were also prepared by adopting the same procedure under identical conditions.

A simple and efficient anion adsorption method was used to prepare 1 wt.% Au/doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts in the absence of any base, reducing and protective agents [10,22]. In brief, an appropriate amount of HAuCl<sub>4</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O (Alfa Aesar, 99.9%) was dissolved in deionized water and then, the gold solution was heated to 343 K followed by the addition of required amount of support. After stirring for 1 h, the solution was cooled to room temperature, filtered off, washed with aq. NH<sub>3</sub> and distilled water in order to remove Cl<sup>–</sup> ions and oven dried at 373 K for 12 h. Finally, the samples were calcined in air at 573 K for 4 h (1 K/min) and stored in a desiccator under vacuum conditions. The Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> sample was also synthesized under identical conditions for the purpose of comparison. For convenience, the prepared catalysts, namely, Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>, Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–ZrO<sub>2</sub> are designated as AC, ACF, ACL and ACZ, respectively.

### 2.2. Catalyst characterization

The synthesized catalysts were analyzed by X-ray diffraction using a Rigaku Multiflex instrument equipped with nickel-filtered Cu K $\alpha$  (0.15418 nm) radiation source and a scintillation counter detector. The intensity data were collected over a 2 $\theta$  range of 12–80° with a 0.02° step size and using a counting time of 1 s per point. The average crystallite size of the samples was estimated with the help of Scherrer equation and the lattice parameter was calculated by a standard cubic indexation method. Specific surface areas of the samples were determined by single point BET analysis of the nitrogen adsorption isotherms at liquid N<sub>2</sub> temperature (77 K) recorded on a SMART SORB-92/93 instrument via a thermal conductivity detector (TCD). Prior to the experiment, samples were degassed at 393 K for 2 h to remove any surface adsorbed residual moisture. Surface area was obtained by using desorption data.

Raman spectra were recorded at room temperature using a LabRam HR800UV Raman spectrometer (Horiba Jobin-Yvon) fitted with a confocal microscope and liquid-nitrogen cooled charge-coupled device (CCD) detector. Samples were excited with the emission line at 632.81 nm from an Ar<sup>+</sup> ion laser (Spectra Physics) which was focused on the sample under the microscope with the diameter of the analyzed spot being ~1  $\mu$ m. The acquisition time was adjusted according to the intensity of Raman scattering. The X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy analysis was performed on a VG Scientific ESCALAB-210 spectrometer using Mg K $\alpha$  radiation (1253.6 eV) from an X-ray source operating at 15 kV and 20 mA. The spectra were collected with an analyzer pass energy of 20 eV, 0.1 eV step and an electron take off angle of 90°. The recorded XPS spectra were charge corrected with respect to the C 1s peak at 284.6 eV. The samples were pressed into thin wafers and degassed in a preparation chamber before analysis. The Shirley background subtraction and peak fitting with Gaussian–Lorentzian product peak was performed using XPS processing program Advantage (Thermo Electron Corporation).

TEM studies were made on a JEM-2010 (JEOL) instrument equipped with a slow-scan CCD camera at an accelerating voltage of 200 kV. Samples for TEM were prepared by crushing the materials in an agate mortar and dispersing them ultrasonically in ethyl alcohol. After dispersion, a droplet was deposited on a copper grid supporting a perforated carbon film and allowed to dry. The specimen was examined under vacuum at room temperature. The UV–vis DRS measurements were performed over the wavelength range of  $\lambda = 200\text{--}750\text{ nm}$  using a GBS-Cintra 10e UV–vis NIR spectrophotometer with an integration sphere diffuse reflectance attachment. Sample was diluted in a KBr matrix by pelletization.

FT-IR spectra were recorded on a Nicolet 740 FT-IR spectrometer at ambient conditions using KBr discs with a nominal resolution of  $4\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and averaging 100 spectra. TG-DTA analysis was performed on a Mettler Toledo TG-SDTA instrument. The samples were heated from ambient temperature to 1073 K under the flow of  $\text{N}_2$ . The heating rate in each case was kept at 10 K/min. The TPD ( $\text{NH}_3/\text{CO}_2$ -TPD) measurements were performed on a Micromeritics AutoChem 2910 instrument. A thermal conductivity detector was used for continuous monitoring of the desorbed gas and the areas under the peaks were integrated. Prior to TPD measurements, samples were pre-treated at 573 K for 1 h and then saturated with ultra-pure anhydrous  $\text{NH}_3/\text{CO}_2$  for 1 h, and subsequently flushed with He gas to remove the physisorbed gas.

### 2.3. Catalytic activity measurement

The catalytic activity of the supported gold samples for CO oxidation was measured at atmospheric pressure in the temperature range of 223–573 K in a fixed bed quartz micro-reactor. The reaction was performed by using 1% CO and 20%  $\text{O}_2$  balanced with He gas. Using mass-flow controllers, 100 ml/min of the feed were dosed onto 100 mg of sample (250–355  $\mu\text{m}$  sieve fraction), which results in  $W/F = 0.06\text{ g s ml}^{-1}$ . The reaction temperature was monitored using a thermocouple placed in the hollow part of the reactor. All gas concentrations were monitored with a X-STREAM X2GP gas analyzer (Emerson), which applies non-dispersive IR photometry for CO and  $\text{CO}_2$  and a magnetic method for  $\text{O}_2$ . Prior to oxidation of CO, the catalyst was heated to 573 K in 20%  $\text{O}_2$  balanced by the He gas using a heating ramp of 1 K/min and kept at the final temperature for 1 h.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Catalyst characterization

The XRD profiles of ceria-based supports investigated in the present study are shown in Fig. 1. As can be seen from the figure, all ceria-based supports clearly show the fluorite-type cubic structure of  $\text{CeO}_2$  [13,14,23,24]. Conversely, no XRD peaks related to dopant metal oxides, namely,  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$  and  $\text{ZrO}_2$  were observed. Interestingly, the diffraction peaks of doped ceria are broad with 2-theta values shifted to various extents in comparison to pure ceria. These noteworthy observations demonstrate the existence of smaller crystallite sizes in the doped ceria supports exhibiting either lattice contraction or expansion. The diffraction peaks of CZ and CF samples were shifted to higher angle side relative to C, whereas the CL patterns are shifted to lower angle side. Shift in the peak positions could be elucidated by comparing the ionic radii of guest ( $\text{Fe}^{3+} \sim 0.064\text{ nm}$ ,  $\text{Zr}^{4+} \sim 0.084\text{ nm}$  and  $\text{La}^{3+} \sim 0.11\text{ nm}$ ) and host ions ( $\text{Ce}^{4+} \sim 0.097\text{ nm}$ ). Perceptibly, the ionic radius of  $\text{La}^{3+}$  is high compared to the  $\text{Ce}^{4+}$ , hence lattice expansion is noticed for CL support due to the incorporation of  $\text{La}^{3+}$  into the  $\text{CeO}_2$  lattice. On the contrary, lattice contraction is found for CZ and CF samples attributed to the substitution of  $\text{Ce}^{4+}$  by smaller sized  $\text{Zr}^{4+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  cations, respectively.

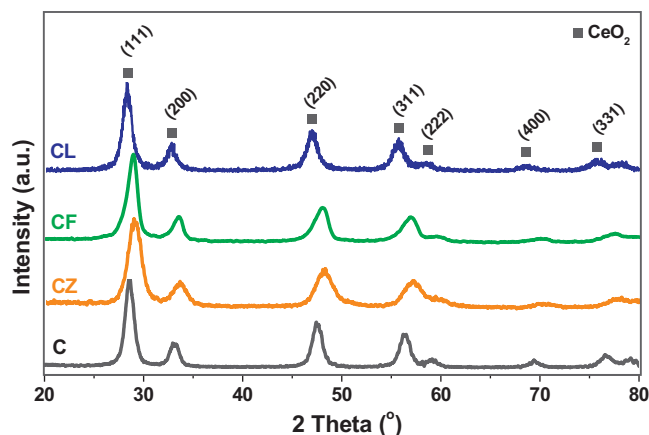


Fig. 1. XRD patterns of  $\text{CeO}_2$  (C),  $\text{CeO}_2\text{--ZrO}_2$  (CZ),  $\text{CeO}_2\text{--Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  (CF) and  $\text{CeO}_2\text{--La}_2\text{O}_3$  (CL) supports.

Accordingly, a decrease in the lattice parameters is noted for CZ and CF supports in comparison to pure  $\text{CeO}_2$ , whereas the CL sample showed an increased lattice parameter (Table 1). The observed key features, such as peak shift, variation in the lattice parameter and absence of XRD peaks pertaining to the dopant metal oxides evidently confirm the formation of ceria solid solutions.

In order to know the influence of dopants on the textural properties of ceria, average crystallite sizes and specific surface areas were determined (Table 1). Remarkably, the addition of dopants led to a decrease in the crystallite size of ceria, indicating the favorable role of dopants toward inhibition of crystal growth of ceria against high thermal treatments. The average crystallite size of C, CL, CF and CZ samples are 8.9, 8.3, 6.7 and 4.7 nm, respectively. In general, the mixed oxides exhibit higher BET surface areas in comparison to the individual oxides [24]. As asserted, the surface area of ceria was significantly increased after incorporation of metal ions, in particular in the case of Zr-incorporation. The specific surface area of C, CL, CF and CZ samples are 41, 66, 72 and  $84\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ , respectively, which corroborates well with the crystallite size decrease (Table 1). The meticulous correlation of crystallite size and surface area of ceria supports reveals that  $\text{Zr}^{4+}$ -incorporation into the  $\text{CeO}_2$  reduces its crystallite size and enhances its surface area compared to other metal ions (Fig. S1 of the supplementary material).

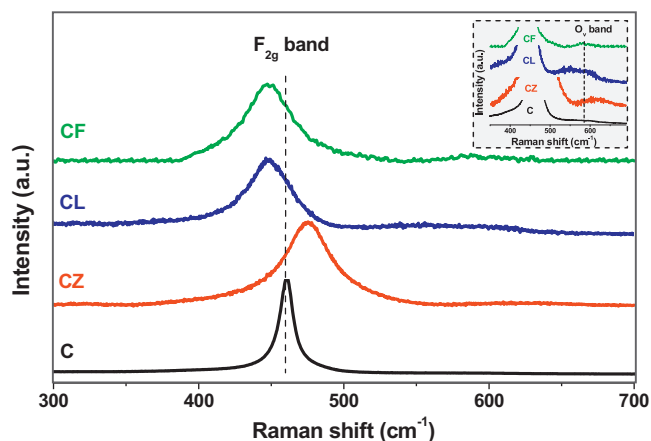
Raman spectroscopy is an excellent technique to investigate the structural properties of ceria-based materials because of its strong sensitive nature to both M–O bond arrangement and lattice defects [25]. Fig. 2 represents Raman spectra of ceria-based mixed oxides along with pure ceria. Pure  $\text{CeO}_2$  shows a prominent peak at  $\sim 460\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , which could be assigned to  $\text{F}_{2g}$  Raman-active mode of the fluorite structured  $\text{CeO}_2$ , confirming the observations made from the XRD studies [18]. An additional small shoulder at around  $600\text{ cm}^{-1}$  denotes the oxygen vacancy defects ( $\text{O}_v$ ) preferentially located on the surface of  $\text{CeO}_2$  (Fig. 2, inset). Intriguingly, the  $\text{F}_{2g}$  band of CZ is shifted to higher wavenumber side ( $\sim 474\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ; Zr), whereas the  $\text{F}_{2g}$  bands of CL and CF supports are shifted to lower

Table 1

BET surface area, average crystallite size, and lattice parameter of  $\text{CeO}_2$  (C),  $\text{CeO}_2\text{--La}_2\text{O}_3$  (CL),  $\text{CeO}_2\text{--Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  (CF) and  $\text{CeO}_2\text{--ZrO}_2$  (CZ) supports.

Sample	BET surface area ( $\text{m}^2/\text{g}$ )	$\text{CeO}_2$ lattice parameter ( $\text{\AA}$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$\text{CeO}_2$ crystallite size (nm) <sup>b</sup>
C	41	5.410	8.9
CL	66	5.488	8.3
CF	72	5.358	6.7
CZ	84	5.350	4.7

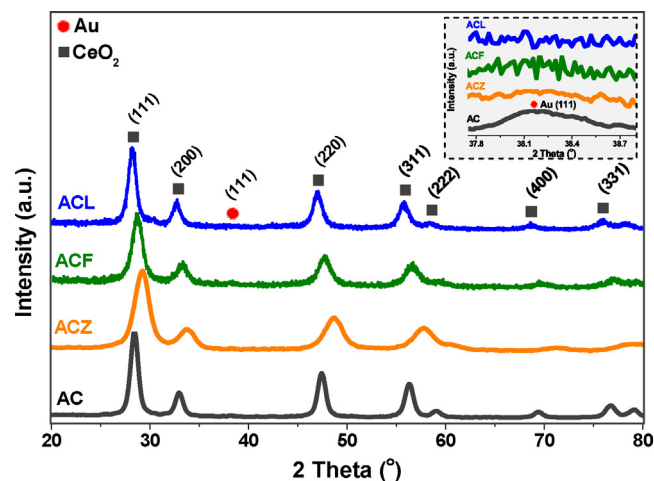
<sup>a,b</sup> Estimated from XRD studies.



**Fig. 2.** Vis-Raman spectra of CeO<sub>2</sub> (C), CeO<sub>2</sub>-ZrO<sub>2</sub> (CZ), CeO<sub>2</sub>-La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (CL) and CeO<sub>2</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (CF) supports.

wavenumbers ( $\sim 447\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ; La and  $\sim 448\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ; Fe) relative to pure CeO<sub>2</sub>. The shift in the F<sub>2g</sub> mode reveals the variation of the M–O vibration frequency, which is attributed to the difference in the ionic radii of Ce<sup>4+</sup> and dopants [25]. No Raman bands corresponding to ZrO<sub>2</sub>, Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> were found, confirming the formation of ceria-based solid solutions and corroborating well with the XRD results. Further, the incorporation of metal ions into the ceria enhances the oxygen vacancies (Fig. 2, inset). The CZ and CF samples exhibited only one type of O<sub>v</sub> band at  $\sim 600\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , whereas the CL sample displayed two bands at  $\sim 553$  and  $\sim 601\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The peak at lower wavenumber reveals the extrinsic oxygen vacancies and the higher wavenumber band indicates the intrinsic oxygen vacancies [25,26]. Generally, the intrinsic vacancies could be formed due to the presence of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions, while extrinsic vacancies are generated by the charge compensation effect of lower valence dopants. Therefore, the Zr<sup>4+</sup>-incorporation promotes only intrinsic vacancies attributed to the presence of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions in the CZ sample (evidence from XPS studies, Fig. 6). For CL support, both extrinsic and intrinsic vacancies were found, which can be ascribed to doping of lower valence La<sup>3+</sup> as well as the existence of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions, respectively. In contrast to CL, the CF sample showed only one O<sub>v</sub> band. It was suggested that small doping amounts of Fe<sup>3+</sup> induces the generation of oxygen vacancies (vacancy compensation mechanism), whereas large doping amounts annihilate them (dopant interstitial compensation mechanism) [27]. In the present study, due to low doping amounts of Fe<sup>3+</sup>, substantial concentration of oxygen vacancies were observed.

Fig. 3 represents the XRD patterns of supported gold catalysts calcined at 573 K. A close examination of Figs. 1 and 3 reveals that there was no discernible variation in the diffraction profiles of ceria-based supports after deposition of gold. This notable result suggests the preservation of crystalline structure and average crystallite sizes of ceria in the Au-containing samples [28]. A broad XRD (1 1 1) peak at  $2\theta \sim 38.18^\circ$  was noticed for AC sample due to the face centered cubic structure of gold (Fig. 3, inset), indicating the presence of larger Au particles [12]. In contrast, no Au diffraction peaks were found in the case of ACZ, ACL and ACF catalysts owing to the fact that the gold particle sizes are very small ( $<5\text{ nm}$ ) [29]. The absence of Au diffraction peaks also indicates the existence of highly dispersed gold particles on the surface of doped ceria supports that are too small to be detected by the XRD technique [29,30]. Table 2 summarizes the gold loading and BET surface areas of the supported gold samples. The ICP-AES measurements showed that the employed anion adsorption method provide better gold retention efficiencies as observed in the traditional deposition–precipitation techniques [18,30]. The determined gold contents of AC, ACZ, ACL and ACF



**Fig. 3.** XRD patterns of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL) catalysts.

samples were 0.89, 0.94, 0.98 and 0.76 wt.%, respectively. Moreover, the chlorine content is very low for all the gold catalysts ( $<200\text{ ppm}$ ). The ammonia treatment would be the crucial factor in the efficient removal of chlorine residues [10,22]. The obtained atomic ratios of host to guest ions (Ce/Zr = 0.47/0.53, Ce/La = 0.78/0.22 and Ce/Fe = 0.89/0.11) are close to the calculated values (Ce/Zr = 0.5/0.5, Ce/La = 0.8/0.2 and Ce/Fe = 0.9/0.1), confirming the stoichiometric atomic concentration. The determined specific surface areas of AC, ACZ, ACL and ACF catalysts are 38, 73, 54 and  $61\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ , respectively. The decrease in the surface area of ceria supports after the addition of gold might be due to the penetration of the dispersed gold into the pores of the support.

XPS analysis was performed to know the valence states of the elements present in the prepared catalysts. The Au 4f XPS profiles of gold catalysts are illustrated in Fig. 4. The Au 4f spectra are characterized by a doublet corresponding to Au 4f<sub>7/2</sub> and Au 4f<sub>5/2</sub> states with a separation of about 3.7 eV. All the catalysts showed a main Au 4f<sub>7/2</sub> peak in the range of 83.3–83.6 eV with the analogous Au 4f<sub>5/2</sub> peak at around 87.1–87.4 eV, which obviously confirm the presence of metallic gold (Au<sup>0</sup>) species [31,32]. On the other hand, XPS peaks related to oxidized gold (Au<sup>1+</sup> 4f<sub>7/2</sub> at 84.5 eV and Au<sup>3+</sup> 4f<sub>7/2</sub> at 86.6 eV) were not identified. However, the quantitative assessment of the gold oxidation state by XPS technique is limited because the final state effects associated with particle size could extremely disturb the XPS features of gold [31,33]. As well, the exposure of gold particles to photoelectrons under high vacuum conditions might also affect the gold oxidation state. The O 1s XPS profiles of the gold catalysts are presented in Fig. 5. The O 1s spectra can be fitted into two peaks, indicating the existence of different oxygen species. The peak at lower binding energy ( $\sim 529\text{ eV}$ ) reveals the lattice oxygen, whereas the peak at higher binding energy ( $\sim 532\text{ eV}$ ) shows the surface carbonates and hydroxyl species. The analysis of the FT-IR spectra also evidenced the presence of surface

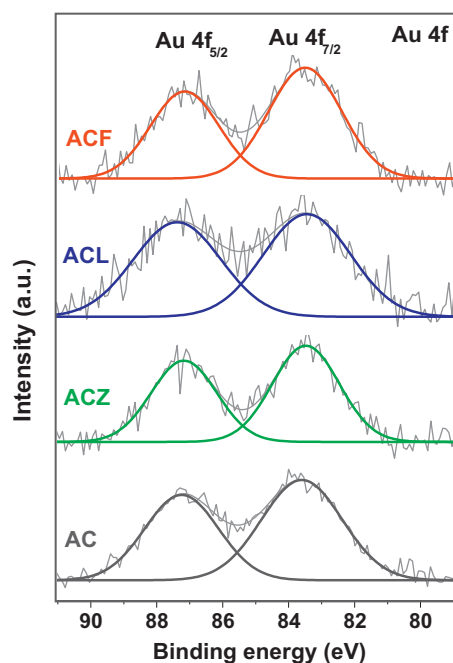
**Table 2**

Gold loading, gold particle size, and BET surface area of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts.

Sample	Au loading (wt.%) <sup>a</sup>	Au particle size (nm)	BET surface area (m <sup>2</sup> /g)
AC	0.89	7.4 <sup>b</sup>	38
ACL	0.98	n.d	54
ACF	0.76	n.d	61
ACZ	0.94	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	73

<sup>a</sup> Obtained from ICP-AES measurements.

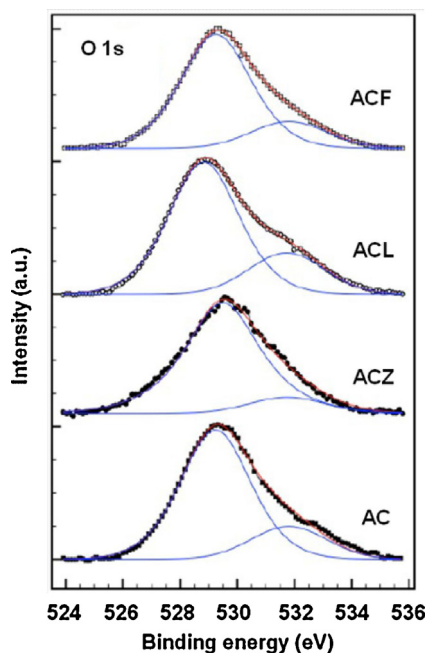
<sup>b</sup> Determined from TEM pictures.



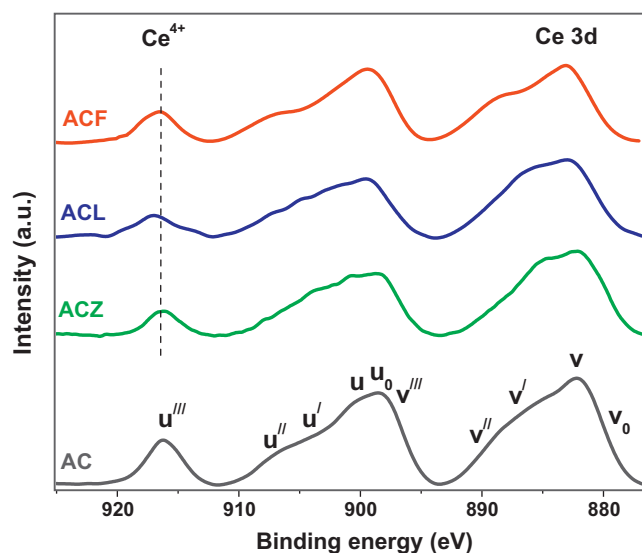
**Fig. 4.** Au 4f XP spectra of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL) catalysts.

carbonates and hydroxyl species in the prepared catalysts (Fig. S2 of the supplementary material) [34,35].

The Ce 3d XP spectra of ceria-based mixed oxide supported gold catalysts are shown in Fig. 6. As can be seen from the figure, the Ce 3d XP spectra are complex in the range of 880–920 eV due to the hybridization of the O 2p valence band with the Ce 4f level in the final state of photoionization [23,24,36]. The labels *u* and *v* refer to the 3d<sub>3/2</sub> and 3d<sub>5/2</sub> spin-orbit components, respectively. The peaks denoted by *u*<sub>0</sub>, *v*<sub>0</sub>, *u'* and *v'* are characteristic peaks of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions (one main line and one satellite), whereas those marked by *v*, *u*, *v''*, *u''*, *v'''* and *u'''* are of Ce<sup>4+</sup> ions (one main line and two



**Fig. 5.** O 1s XP spectra of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts.



**Fig. 6.** Ce 3d XP spectra of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts.

satellites). Therefore, it can be inferred that all samples exhibit both Ce<sup>4+</sup> and Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions. The analysis of the *u'''*(Ce<sup>4+</sup>) peak is one of the most convenient features to estimate the Ce reduction, because it does not overlap with any other peaks. The intensity ratio of the *u'''* peak to the total area of Ce 3d peak (*I<sub>u'''</sub>*/*I<sub>Total</sub>*) is used to determine the surface concentration of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions in such a way that a smaller ratio indicates a higher Ce<sup>3+</sup> concentration [23,37]. The estimated *I<sub>u'''</sub>*/*I<sub>Total</sub>* values were found to be 0.0896, 0.0876, 0.0713 and 0.0625 for AC, ACF, ACL and ACZ catalysts, respectively. Clearly, the Zr-incorporation resulted in high concentration of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions, which play a key role in CO oxidation as discussed in the later paragraphs. Furthermore, the deposition of gold also enhances the Ce<sup>3+</sup> concentration along with the formation of uncoordinated sites near the very small gold particles (*d* ≤ 1 nm) [38].

The Zr 3d, Fe 2p and La 3d XP spectra of the respective Au/doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts are investigated to know the oxidation states of the incorporated metal ions (Fig. S3 of the supplementary material). The deconvoluted peaks at around 184.8 (Zr 3d<sub>3/2</sub>) and 182.2 eV (Zr 3d<sub>5/2</sub>) in the Zr 3d spectrum reveal the presence of Zr<sup>4+</sup> ions [31]. The La 3d spectrum shows two main peaks at ~834.46 (3d<sub>5/2</sub>) and 851.32 eV (3d<sub>3/2</sub>), which demonstrate the existence of La<sup>3+</sup> ions [14]. The satellite peaks appearing on the higher energy side of the 3d<sub>5/2</sub> and 3d<sub>3/2</sub> peaks resulted from the core-hole screening by nearly degenerate O 2p and empty La 4f states. The general explanation for high binding energy satellite peaks is the charge transformation from O 2p to the empty 4f state of La leading to the 3d<sup>9</sup> 4f<sup>1</sup> final states [39]. The XPS peaks of Fe 2p<sub>3/2</sub> (~711 eV) and Fe 2p<sub>1/2</sub> (~724.6 eV) indicate the presence of Fe<sup>3+</sup> ions in the ACF sample [40]. The observed satellite peak at around 718.8 eV does not overlap with either Fe 2p<sub>3/2</sub> or Fe 2p<sub>1/2</sub> peaks. In addition, there is another satellite peak at ~733 eV, which is a satellite peak of the Fe 2p<sub>1/2</sub>.

TEM analysis was performed to know the Au particle size of the AC and ACZ samples (Fig. S4 of the supplementary material). It must be emphasized here that the identification of gold particles from TEM images of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts is hardly noticeable due to the poor contrast between Au and CeO<sub>2</sub> [9,28,41]. The TEM analysis of AC sample reveals larger sized gold nanoparticles with mean diameter of 7.4 nm. For ACZ sample, the observed Au nanoparticles have diameters as low as 1 nm with a mean particle size of ~3.3 nm. The presence of smaller gold nanoparticles in the ACZ sample certainly reveals the favorable role of dopant (Zr) toward the gold

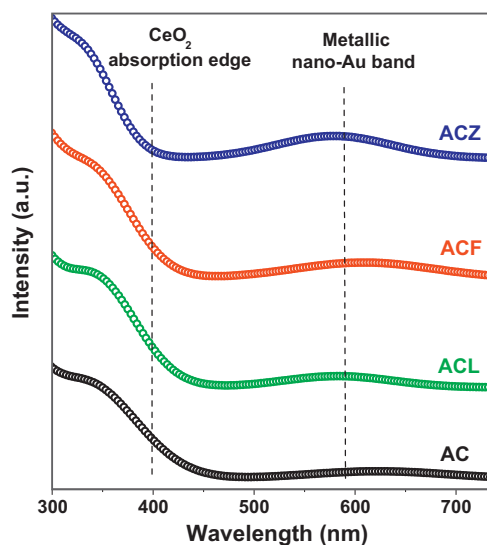


Fig. 7. UV-vis DR spectra of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts.

particle size. As we stated earlier, no Au XRD peaks were found in the case of Au/doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts attributed to existence of smaller gold nanoparticles (Fig. 3, inset). Therefore, by comparing the TEM analysis of ACZ and XRD results of Au/doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts, it can be expected that the ACL and ACF samples also exhibit smaller gold nanoparticles compared to the AC catalyst. Fig. 7 shows the UV-vis DR spectra of the Au catalysts. All samples exhibited a visible band in the range of 500–700 nm, which can be assigned to the surface plasmon resonance (SPR) of metallic gold (Au<sup>0</sup>) nanoparticles [42–44]. The presence of Au<sup>0</sup> species in the prepared catalysts was also evidenced by the XPS results [44]. The appearance of the SPR band normally depends on various parameters, such as gold particle size, its shape, gold content and electronic properties of the surrounding environment [45]. On the other hand, UV-vis DRS spectroscopy is also useful to know the effect of dopants on the ceria crystallite size. Pure crystalline ceria has a band gap of 3.1 eV and absorbs strongly in the UV region with the absorption threshold near 400 nm [23]. The charge-transfer transitions between O 2p and Ce 4f levels are accountable for the UV absorption of ceria. The UV absorption edge wavelength is highly sensitive to the particle size of semiconductor materials, such as ceria and zirconia [46]. When crystallite size is below 10 nm, the band gap energy increases with decreasing the crystallite size and the UV absorption edge of the inter band transition can be blue-shifted. As can be seen from Fig. 7, the absorption edge of the inter band transition is blue-shifted from AC → ACL → ACF → ACZ, which corroborates well with the average crystallite size of the ceria supports determined from the XRD studies (Table 1). Hence, it can be suggested that incorporation of metal ions into the ceria enhances its band gap energy and reduces its crystallite size.

### 3.2. Catalytic CO oxidation

The catalytic activity of the gold samples was studied for CO oxidation reaction and the obtained results are presented in Fig. 8. It was found that the conversion of CO increases with reaction temperature for all the catalysts. The shapes of the activity curves clearly revealed that the AC, ACF and ACZ samples catalyze CO oxidation at lower temperatures, whereas ACL catalyst shows an opposite effect. For better comparison of the activities, we determined the reaction rates normalized to Au content at 330 K as shown in Fig. 9. The obtained values are  $0.0392 \times 10^{-6}$ ,

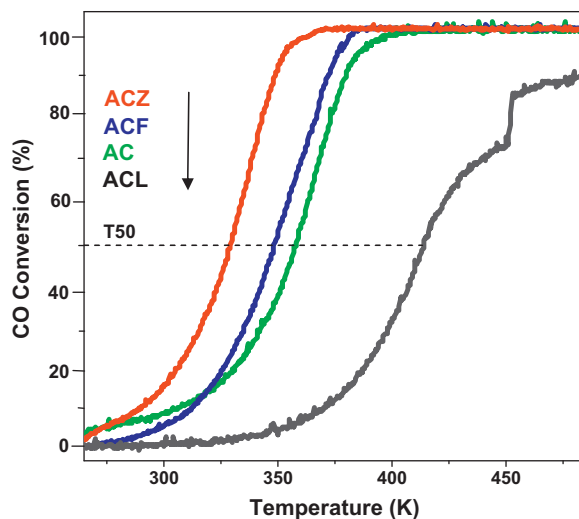


Fig. 8. Oxidation of CO over Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts.

$0.0227 \times 10^{-6}$ ,  $0.0152 \times 10^{-6}$  and  $0.00176 \times 10^{-6} \text{ mol}_{\text{CO}} \text{ s}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{Au}}^{-1}$  for ACZ, ACF, AC and ACL catalysts, respectively. Several studies have shown that the CO oxidation of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts follows mostly the Mars-van Krevelen type mechanism, in which CO<sub>2</sub> desorption determines the rate of CO oxidation [47–49]. The low reaction rate of ACL sample could be due to low CO<sub>2</sub> desorption from the sample surface, attributed to its strong adsorption ability toward CO<sub>2</sub>, as discussed in the later paragraphs. Also, the ACZ catalyst oxidizes 50% of CO (T50) at lower temperature (328 K) than the other catalysts, and the T50 values for ACF, AC and ACL catalysts are 346, 357 and 413 K, respectively. Further, the ACZ catalyst showed 100% CO conversion at around 354 K followed by ACF, AC and ACL catalysts at 376, 385 and 538 K, respectively. Surprisingly, a sharp increase in the CO oxidation after 450 K was noticed for ACL sample. The stability of the catalytic activity was studied with AC, ACF and ACZ catalysts at 328 K for 8 h (Fig. 10). It was found that both ACZ and ACF catalysts show reasonably stable CO oxidation activity, whereas the CO conversion continuously decreased with time in the case of AC catalyst.

Plausible reasons to explain the activity of gold catalysts investigated in the present work have been sought. For gold catalyzed CO oxidation, a noticeable relationship between the activity and gold particle size has been demonstrated [50]. Particularly, Au

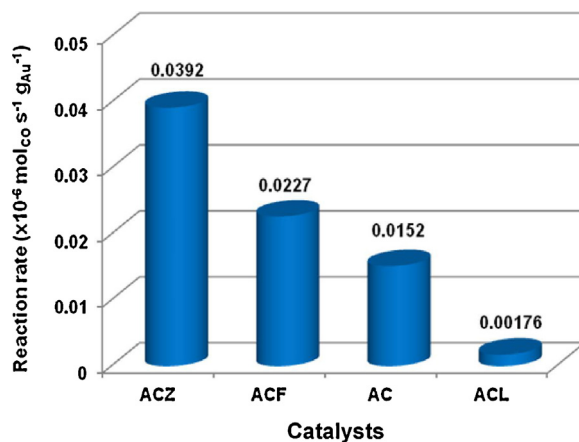
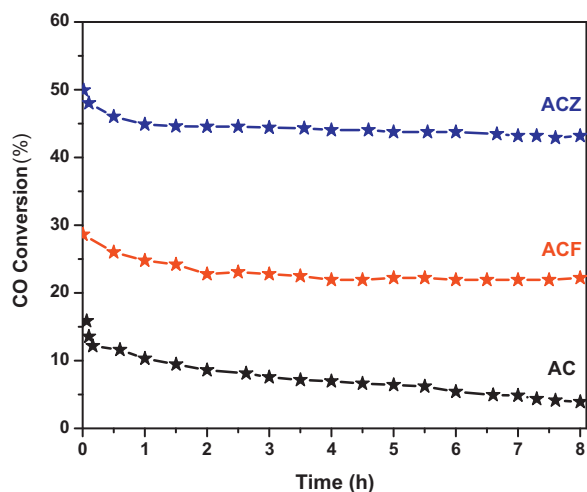


Fig. 9. Comparison of CO oxidation reaction rates at  $T=330 \text{ K}$  of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts. Rates were measured with 1% CO and 20% O<sub>2</sub> (balance – He) at  $W/F=0.06 \text{ g s ml}^{-1}$ .



**Fig. 10.** Stability of CO oxidation activity over Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF), and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>-ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts studied at 328 K.

particles with diameter of below 5 nm exhibit high catalytic activity in comparison to large Au particles (20–40 nm). It is noticed from the XRD and TEM studies that doped ceria supports show a favorable effect toward gold particle size. However, the AC catalyst exhibited higher CO oxidation activity than the ACL sample. Therefore, it can be presumed that the presence of small Au particles is not the only prerequisite for achieving high CO conversion [12,51,52]. The oxidation state of gold also plays a crucial role in the CO oxidation: indeed there is a sturdy controversy about this subject [52,53]. It was reported that oxidized or partially oxidized gold serves as a key species in the CO oxidation. Conversely, many studies proposed that metallic gold (Au<sup>0</sup>) particles are the main catalytically active species. In the particular case of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>, the metallic gold species shows better CO oxidation activity when compared to ionic gold [54,55]. In the present study, all the gold samples exhibited only Au<sup>0</sup> species (evidence from XPS results, Fig. 4). Therefore, it can be suggested that the metallic Au species alone catalyze CO oxidation at quite low temperatures in the absence of ionic Au species.

It has been proved that the existence of oxygen vacancies in the ceria supports shows a beneficial effect toward the gold dispersion, leading to smaller gold particles and thereby, enhanced CO oxidation activity [9,56,57]. As we mentioned earlier, the Au/doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts exhibited smaller Au NPs due to the presence of larger amounts of oxygen vacancies in the doped ceria supports. Moreover, the activation of oxygen during CO oxidation mainly occurs on the surface of oxygen vacancies in the vicinity of the boundary with the gold particles [58,59]. The activated oxygen reacts with an adjacent CO molecule adsorbed on gold most likely at the edges and the corners. As well-known, the formation of oxygen vacancies is accompanied by the reduction of Ce<sup>4+</sup> ions to Ce<sup>3+</sup>, and the concentration of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions is proportional to that of oxygen vacancies [60]. Among the studied catalysts, the ACZ sample exhibited higher concentration of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions (Table 3), and hence, it contains a large amount of oxygen vacancies. The promotional effect of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions is noticed for CO oxidation of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> catalysts [47,61,62]. Therefore,

the existence of enriched Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions and thereby, improved oxygen vacancies could be a reason for the higher CO oxidation activity of the ACZ catalyst in comparison to other Au catalysts. Although the ACL catalyst has a large amount of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions compared to AC sample (Table 3), it showed very low CO oxidation activity.

Several experimental studies have proved that existence of carbonate species on the surface of Au catalysts could block the active sites essential for CO oxidation [63–66]. The accumulation of carbonates strongly depends on the nature of the support. The acidic supports were found to be more resistant to deactivation by carbonates than the basic supports [67]. Generally, ceria is characterized by both acidic- and basic-properties, which can be significantly improved by doping of various metal ions [68–70]. Consequently, they can be easily hydroxylated and/or carbonated in the presence of air. In particular, CO<sub>2</sub> (a weak Lewis acid) is an unavoidable contaminant of ceria-based materials [71]. To understand this, the un-calcined gold catalysts were subjected to TG–DTA analysis as shown in Fig. 11. All samples exhibited a strong endothermic peak between 323 and 423 K, indicating desorption of either physically or chemically adsorbed water molecules [71,72]. Additionally, an endothermic peak was identified at around 573 K for the AC, ACZ and ACF samples attributed to desorption of more firmly bounded carbonate species [71,73,74]. Therefore, it is understandable that thermal treatment of these catalysts at 573 K efficiently removes the surface carbonates. On the contrary, the ACL catalyst exhibited several weight loss peaks at higher temperatures due to the removal of different hydroxycarbonate and/or polycarbonate species, and other contaminants [71]. Therefore, most of the carbonates would be retained on the surface of the ACL catalyst after calcination at 573 K. The ability of ACL catalyst to form various carbonates is due to the strong basic nature of the La as compared to Zr and Fe (acidic nature) [75–77]. Hence, it can be expected that incorporation of Zr and Fe enhances the acidic properties of CeO<sub>2</sub>, whereas the La-doping improves the basic properties.

To know the effect of La on the acid–base properties of the CeO<sub>2</sub>, we have performed TPD of NH<sub>3</sub> and of CO<sub>2</sub> over the CL support (Fig. S5 of the supplementary material). The NH<sub>3</sub>-TPD profile shows three desorption maxima at around 424, 673 and 972 K, corresponding to weak, medium and strong acidic sites, respectively [78]. Similar to NH<sub>3</sub>-TPD, in the CO<sub>2</sub>-TPD profiles also, three peaks could be observed at around 395, 723 and 997 K, respectively, related to weak, medium and strong basic sites. The estimated relative ratio of basic sites to acidic sites (B/A ~ 71.2%) reveals that the CL support exhibits higher concentration of basic sites than of acidic sites. Therefore, it can be expected that the ACL catalyst has strong ability to form and/or adsorb different carbonate species, which could be the reason for its low CO oxidation activity. In addition, due to strong carbonate adsorption ability of ACL catalyst, the formed CO<sub>2</sub> in the CO oxidation reaction could interact with the surface active sites that facilitate the generation of more carbonate species [79]. The resultant carbonates would remain on the catalyst surface and the reaction temperatures are high enough for the decomposition of carbonates, leading to the unusual enhancement in the catalytic activity. As stated, the observed sharp increase in the CO oxidation of ACL sample might be due to desorption of the accumulated carbonate species. These interesting findings could be

**Table 3**  
XPS core level binding energies of gold, cerium, oxygen and dopants in the synthesized gold catalysts.

Sample	Au 4f <sub>7/2</sub> (eV)	O 1s (eV)	Ce 3d <sub>5/2</sub> (eV)	Zr 3d <sub>5/2</sub> (eV)	La 3d <sub>5/2</sub> (eV)	Fe 2p <sub>3/2</sub> (eV)	I <sub>u   </sub> /I <sub>Total</sub> <sup>a</sup>
AC	83.6	528.8	917.5	–	–	–	0.0896
ACZ	83.5	529.4	916.7	182.3	–	–	0.0625
ACL	83.5	529.7	916.6	–	834.4	–	0.0713
ACF	83.3	529.4	917.1	–	–	711.2	0.0876

<sup>a</sup> Estimated from the Ce 3d XPS spectra.

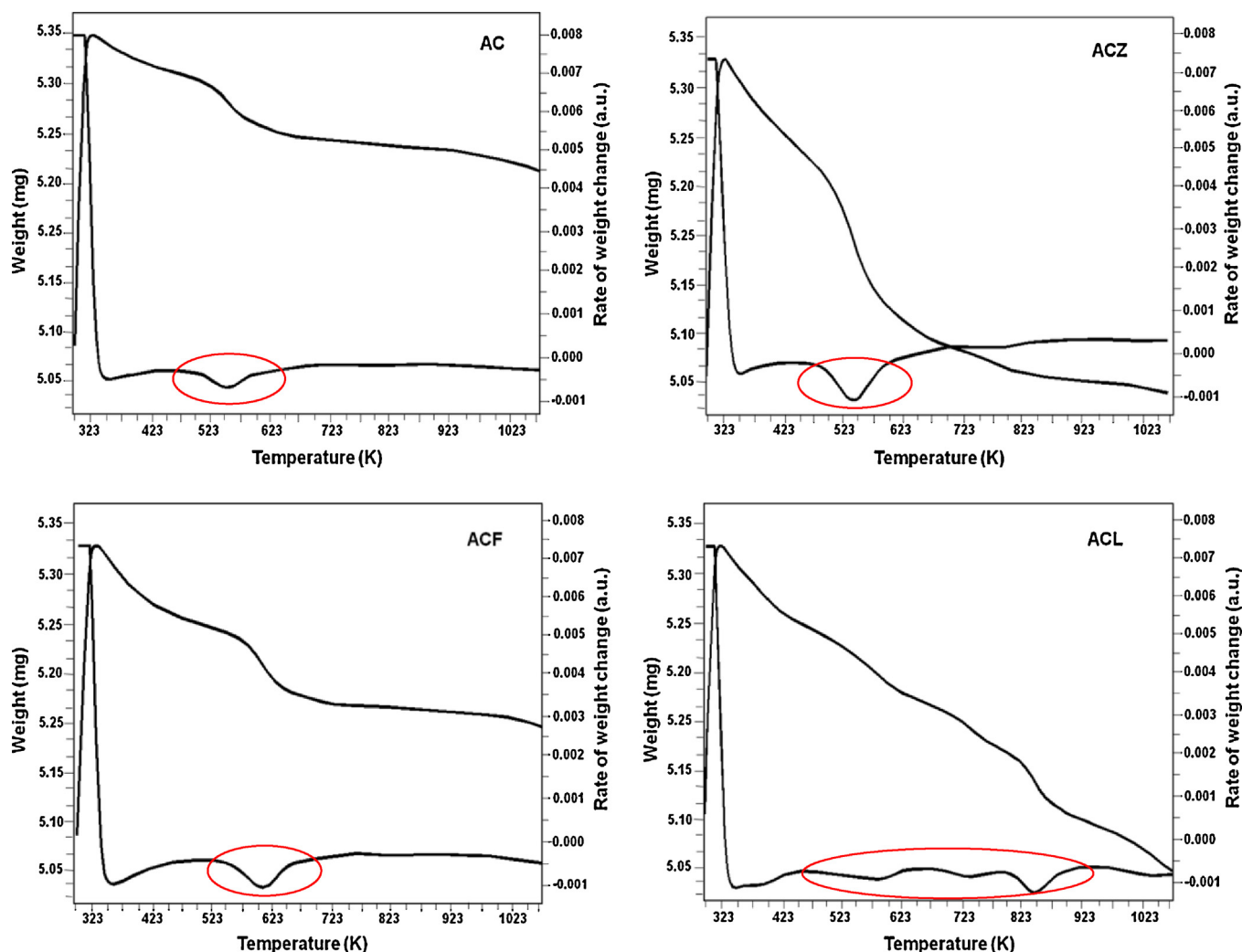


Fig. 11. TG-DTA profiles of Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> (AC), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACF), Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (ACL) and Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–ZrO<sub>2</sub> (ACZ) catalysts.

helpful in the development of doped-CeO<sub>2</sub> supported Au catalysts for CO oxidation and related applications.

#### 4. Conclusions

The modification of CeO<sub>2</sub> was successfully achieved by incorporation of various metal ions, namely Fe<sup>3+</sup>, La<sup>3+</sup> and Zr<sup>4+</sup>. Doped ceria samples exhibited smaller crystallite size, higher specific surface area and more abundant oxygen vacancies than pure ceria. Among, Zr-incorporation showed a favorable role on the textural properties of ceria. The XRD and TEM analyses revealed the promotional role of dopants to obtain smaller gold nanoparticles. Among the investigated catalysts, the Au/CeO<sub>2</sub>–ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalyst exhibited the highest CO oxidation activity, which was attributed to its high content of Ce<sup>3+</sup> ions and oxygen vacancies. On the other hand, the La-doped Au/CeO<sub>2</sub> showed an opposite effect because of its strong ability to form and/or adsorb various carbonates, which could block the active sites crucial for CO oxidation. Further, the ACZ and ACF catalysts exhibited reasonably stable activity in the time-on-stream studies in comparison to the AC catalyst.

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#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.apcatb.2013.08.035>.

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